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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [ASEC](#) [MZ](#)
SUBJECT: CRIME RATES STABLE, BUT VIOLENT CRIME IS UP

REF: A. 07 MAPUTO 949
[B](#). MAPUTO 746
[C](#). MAPUTO 487

[1](#)1. (SBU) According to law enforcement officials, crime rates in Maputo for July and August--traditionally a period of increased crime for the city (ref A)--have remained stable compared to the same timeframe in previous years. However, anecdotal evidence suggests that these numbers may mask a change in the type of crimes being committed, as violent crime appears to be trending upwards. Press reports indicate an increase in crimes involving weapons (especially guns), that were previously rare--in the past, criminals tended to use sheer numbers to overwhelm their victims. As a part of this trend, there have been increased reports of carjacking, violent home invasions (ref B), and comprehensive robberies of all customers inside business establishments. There have also been six kidnappings-for-ransom reported since just August 1, compared to none reported in the past two years.

[1](#)2. (SBU) Mozambican sociologist Carlos Serra told polspecialist on 8/15 that he sees a direct link between the return of 40,000 Mozambican nationals who fled xenophobic attacks in South Africa (ref C), and a change in the type of crime committed in Maputo, claiming that "crimes like kidnapping never occurred in Mozambique before." Public opinion suggests as well that it is widely believed that returnees learned more aggressive and violent criminal behavior in South Africa.

[1](#)3. (SBU) While Maputo police have promised a strong response to the increasingly violent crimes, their presence on the streets does not appear to have visibly changed and crime hasn't fallen. For example, a local businessman's home (across the street from the Diplomatic Police Station and 500 meters from the Chancery) was robbed by masked men wielding AK-47s last week. The police did not respond when called to the scene, apparently due to the late hour (9:00 PM local).

[1](#)4. (SBU) COMMENT and EMBASSY ACTIONS: The general public may blame returnees from South Africa for recent violent crime, although jumps in the prices of food and transportation may be more significant drivers with rent, utilities, and fuel inflation above 10 percent, and subsidized fuel prices increasing in June by 17 percent alone. Inflation combined with minimal increases in real wages for the few workers that are part of the formal economy likely play significant roles as well. These factors have resulted in a growing discontent with the Guebuza administration, which has had a surprisingly muted response so far. Aside from raising our concerns about the safety of our staff and families with law enforcement agencies, the Embassy held an all-hands town hall meeting on August 5 to discuss the best practices of home security, has directed the LGF contractor to increase vigilance at our properties, is hiring a residential security coordinator to oversee

additional improvements, and has redoubled efforts to ensure
community participation in weekly radio checks. END
COMMENT/ACTIONS.
Amani